

long distance (mileven week) by urdearestmom

Category: Stranger Things, 2016

Genre: Romance

Language: English

Status: Completed

Published: 2018-11-05 07:49:27

Updated: 2018-11-05 07:49:27

Packaged: 2019-12-12 23:02:37

Rating: T

Chapters: 1

Words: 3,473

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: "Mike, I think we gotta go. Long distance, remember?" "Right, right," he says. "I just posted my letter this afternoon, so hopefully you'll get it soon. I love you." "Love you too. Have a good night." There's a click and Mike is gone. El sighs again and focuses on her dishes. Long distance sucks.

long distance (mileven week)

February 1990, Hawkins, IN

Jane "El" Hopper is the last one out of the library tonight. At first, Marissa had been reluctant to give her the job given she was Hopper's kid and Marissa didn't exactly have the highest opinion of the town's chief, but she took a chance and El is quickly proving herself worthy. She loves being in the library, surrounded by words. She didn't have them for so long that being somewhere full of words is still a wondrous thing. It probably always will be.

Anyhow, she's got to lock up before she heads home for dinner, and even though it's only just after six o'clock, it's already dark out. It's as cold as a Midwestern winter usually is, which is to say very cold. El wonders if it's as cold where Mike is.

She almost drops her keys in the snow as she goes to open the Blazer she'd inherited from Hopper after the station bought a new one (Hopper had helped her repaint it a nice blue so she didn't have to drive around in a truck with "HAWKINS POLICE" emblazoned across the sides), but she fumbles and catches them. The radio's playing that one Phil Collins song as she pulls away from the library in the direction of her house.

Hopper's not coming home until late, El knows he isn't, but it doesn't help to make her feel less lonely when she pulls up outside the dark house. It really sucks not having any of her friends in town. They've all spread out across the country: Max went back to San Diego, Will and Dustin to New York, Lucas to Seattle, and Mike to *Connecticut*. God, did it really have to be so far? Sometimes the only thing that keeps her from plunging into "the depths of despair", as Dustin used to call it, is the fact that she's going to see him soon.

Max and Lucas are the farthest away, but El has a totally different relationship with them than she does with Mike. Her need to see them and be with them is so much less pressing. That's why, with Hopper's help planning, El's been saving money to take a trip to Connecticut. The thing is, Mike doesn't know about it. And although it's very hard to keep a secret from him, El promised herself she

wouldn't give it away.

She's about to start washing dishes when the phone rings, and she knows exactly who it is. Mike always calls around this time. They usually only speak over the phone once a week because long distance calls are expensive, and even though El could just talk to her boyfriend over the psychic link she can create, she doesn't like doing that. It's draining.

They mostly send each other letters but Mike insists he'll go insane if he can't listen to her voice, so he calls once every Wednesday.

"Hello?"

El keeps the cordless phone Hopper bought recently hovering by her ear as she starts to wash her plate.

"Hey, El."

"Hi, Mike."

"What are you doing?"

El sighs. "Washing dishes. I'm home alone tonight."

"That sucks. Hopper's late again?"

"It's winter. Lots of accidents."

"Yeah, you're right," Mike agrees. "I miss you," he adds somberly.

El scrubs harshly at a stain on the plate. "Me too. I'm lonely all the time."

"Valentine's is next week. I wish I could be there with you, it'll be our first one we haven't spent together."

Mike sounds upset, and it's this kind of thing that makes El just want to spill her secret surprise plans. She's going to get there *on* Valentine's Day, which is the Wednesday, but she's got to leave on the Friday because Yale only allows guests for three days.

Which is better than nothing, El supposes, but she wishes it didn't have to be like this at all.

She hears another voice in the background ask an unintelligible question, to which Mike responds, "My girlfriend, dumbass. I call her every week, you should know this by now."

The voice laughs and says something else. Mike sighs. "I am so done with you. Can you believe my roommate still doesn't think you're real, El?"

El snorts. "You're on the phone with me, how am I not real?"

"I mean he doesn't believe the person I'm talking to is my girlfriend. He doesn't think I could get one. Lack of faith, if you ask me!" He says the last part louder, clearly directed at the other person in the room with him.

El wants to laugh. He'll be proven wrong next week. "Mike, I think we gotta go. Long distance, remember?"

"Right, right," he says. "I just posted my letter this afternoon, so hopefully you'll get it soon. I love you."

"Love you too. Have a good night."

There's a click and Mike is gone. El sighs again and focuses on her dishes. Long distance *sucks*.

Wednesday morning dawns bright and early. It's Valentine's Day and there've been paper hearts and lovey-dovey shit stuck everywhere in the buildings on campus for the last few days. They make Mike feel like a middle schooler with no one to be his Valentine again. The only person he'd want to be his Valentine anyway is about 850 miles away, so he's kind of screwed on that front. He just really misses her. He saw El at Christmas, but it's been way too long already. He doesn't know how he's supposed to survive the rest of college with her so far away.

His roommate, Eric, wakes him with a pillow to the face, poking fun at him for not having anyone to go to the off-campus party with later.

Mike wasn't going to go anyway, considering it's Wednesday, but whatever.

"Where's your girlfriend now, huh Wheeler?" He teases.

Mike almost wants to punch him in the face. Today's already going to be shitty, he doesn't need this. "I told you she's at home. Can you stop?"

Eric grins. "What was her name again? Eleven?"

Mike groans. "Yes, but she doesn't like it. We don't call her that."

"You totally made that up! Who the fuck names their kid Eleven?"
Eric has sat down on his bed again, kicking his feet up into the air.

"It's a long story that I'm never going to tell you."

"*Yeah*, because it doesn't exist!"

Mike turns over and buries his face in his pillow. "Eric, I swear to god. Just because I only have, like, one picture of her doesn't mean she's fake."

Eric snorts. "The girl's obviously real, I just don't think she's your girlfriend. Girls like that don't date guys like you, man."

"Thanks for the vote of confidence. Can you leave me alone now?"

"You probably write those letters to yourself, don't you?"

"Why would I go to all the effort of doing that just to convince you that I have a girlfriend? I don't care *that* much about your opinion, you know," Mike retorts, turning his head to allow himself to breathe and glare at his roommate.

Eric was an okay guy at the beginning of first semester, but Mike had quickly gotten tired of being teased about his apparent singleness. Eric absolutely refused to believe that his nerdy roommate (who also wasn't exactly conventionally attractive) could possibly be dating someone. Even after being shown the picture of her that Mike always kept in his wallet, and being witness to phone calls between them on

more than one occasion, *and* seeing Mike writing letters, Eric could not and would not be convinced that El was really Mike's girlfriend.

Mike thinks it might be because the fact that they've been dating since they were thirteen is kind of surreal, even to him sometimes. Especially to someone like Eric, who goes through girls like nobody's business. Mike has seen him "date" five girls since they started school in September.

Eric narrows his eyes. "I wouldn't be surprised. I've seen people do the weirdest shit just because they're embarrassed about something. You know, I haven't wanted to say this, but I suspected it from the beginning. You just don't want to admit you came to college a virgin, right? 'Cause I'd be embarrassed if I were you."

And he's crossed the line. "Eric," Mike says, finally sitting up, looking crazed with his hair sticking up every which way, "I literally could not give less of a fuck what you think about my virginity. It's not any of your business, nor is it anyone else's."

Eric's still looking at Mike as he gets out of bed. He shoves on the first shirt he sees and aggressively pulls on a pair of socks, not changing out of his pyjama pants. He only has one class today anyway, and he'll have time to come back and change before he goes to work.

"Listen, man, I'm sorry if that offended you, I just think you might be going a little too far with this whole charade," says Eric quickly. And wow, Mike just loves when Eric pretends to be concerned about him. He can't fucking *wait* for next year so he can get a new roommate who is hopefully better than this one.

He can feel the anger rising and has to take several deep breaths in order to not blow up. *Come on, Mike, you're better than this...* Mike grabs his key and shoves it in his backpack along with his wallet and the binder he needs for his class before rounding on the meathead behind him. "At least I'm not going around messing with girls the way you do. That's what's going too far. You treat them like shit and then you just dump them like they're nothing. They're *people*, asshole, and so am I. Watch what you say."

He wrenches the door open and, noting that there's no one currently in the hall, turns back to his dumbass roommate. "And for the record, not that it matters, but I'm not a virgin. Thanks for the concern, though."

Mike makes sure to close the door as threateningly as he can without slamming it too hard. That ought to get the message through.

El decides that if she ever does this again, she's flying. Driving from Hawkins to New Haven has been so tiring it's ridiculous. The trip itself takes about thirteen hours, but she stopped every three for breaks, so she's actually been on the road for closer to about fifteen hours and she's hated every minute of it since hour four. She left at five in the morning, six in the time zone Connecticut is in, and it's nearing nine at night. The sole thing that has kept her going all day is that at the end of it all, she's going to get to surprise Mike.

El knows he works at a bookstore on campus, so she's going straight there, hoping to arrive before he locks up and leaves. The store closes at nine, after all. But there's *traffic*.

After much deliberation and the passage of the nine o'clock hour, El changes course and heads to the residence buildings instead. She doesn't know which one Mike lives in, or what floor, or which room, but she has something almost like an inner compass that always leads her to him. He's the magnetic north to her Earth. *God, we're such nerds.*

It's like an actual game of hot and cold, but instead of hot and cold it's more of a pull. The pull is stronger when she's close to Mike and weaker the further away she is, but it's always there if she chooses to pay attention to it. They discovered it playing hide and seek when they were fourteen and have occasionally made use of it since, like now. El follows the pull to an old-looking building and sits inside the Blazer contemplating it before killing the engine.

Inside is much warmer, the yellow lighting casting a cozy glow over the stairwell. There's a door on the other side leading to the ground floor, but El's instincts are telling her upstairs is the right way to go. She stops in the third-floor hallway for a second before going left. A

door opens and shuts behind her and she hears footsteps make their way to the main door and disappear down the stairs.

Two doors down from the end of the hall, El comes across a door with the names *Eric & Mike* written on the chalkboard hanging on it and she knows it's the right one. She can hear muffled voices from inside, but she's too excited to wait for them to stop talking. The door swings open almost immediately after she knocks, revealing a young man who is decidedly *not* El's boyfriend. This must be Eric.

He gives her a sleazy grin. "Hello, pretty lady," he says, raising an eyebrow in what El's sure he thinks is an attractive way. In all honesty, it probably would be if El wasn't strictly Mike-sexual. "What brings you here?"

El doesn't have time to respond before she hears the most beautiful voice in the world speak instead. "Can you take her to the party with you? Don't stay here."

Even when his words are sharp, Mike's voice is calming. It washes over her like a warm bath, steadying her nerves. She still has a hard time speaking to people she's not familiar with. El just wishes Mike had already seen her standing there, but he's rooting around in the closet space by his bed.

She clears her throat lightly and smiles. "I'm actually looking for my boyfriend," she says, and she sees Mike pause.

Eric shoots a look at his roommate. "You won't find him here," he answers, followed by a derisive snort.

El smiles again. "I think I might. Mike?"

At this, Mike removes his head from his closet and turns around, and the look on his face is priceless. He looks so shocked that El almost wants to laugh at him, but she's also so happy to see him herself that all she can do is allow her face to mold itself into an ear-splitting grin.

"El?" And it's almost like *that* night all over again, except without the overwhelming stress of the situation they'd all been in the time. But

all the same, El can feel tears build in her eyes and spill down her cheeks as the stupidly huge amount of love she feels for this boy threatens to have her implode on the spot.

She laughs wetly and holds her arms out. "Surprise?"

"Oh my god," he says, tripping over himself to get to her. When he does, he envelops her in a hug so tight she almost can't breathe. "I can't believe you're here!"

El wraps her arms around Mike just below his shoulders and buries her face in his chest, inhaling the familiar scent of the detergent his mom uses (that he's taken the habit of using as well to college with him). It's the most wonderful feeling in the world to have him close and be able to hug him like this. Hearing his voice over 850 miles of cables and hearing it in person are two very different things.

"Why didn't you tell me you were coming?" Mike asks breathlessly, pulling out of the hug but keeping his hands on her waist. They're in their own world now, Eric forgotten in the corner.

"I wanted to surprise you for Valentine's Day," El replies, and she smiles.

Mike moves his hands to cup her face before he kisses her, and she's melting. She hasn't kissed him in two months and it's like a thirsty man finding water in the desert. She *needs* this. She needs to be able to touch him and feel that he's there, to know that he *will* be there when she needs him, just like she wants to be there when he needs her. That's what their relationship has been since day one; being there for each other is the basis of how they care for one another.

El pulls away when she's out of breath, her lips aching to be back against Mike's, but she remembers that someone else is in the room. Eric is standing awkwardly behind Mike with wide eyes.

El smirks. "Do you believe him yet?"

Eric's mouth works but words don't come out. Must be quite a shock, then.

Mike wraps an arm around her waist and pulls her into the room,

falling back onto his bed with a thump. "You can leave now, Eric. Have fun at the party," he says, and then he does a sarcastic little wave and Eric quickly walks out the door, shutting it behind him.

A sigh escapes Mike. "Fuck him, ugh," he remarks. "This morning he accused me of making you up because I didn't want to admit that I'm a virgin. Which I haven't even been in like, over a year, but okay, I guess."

El wrinkles her nose and cuddles up to Mike's side. "Why does it matter?"

"It doesn't, Eric's just a fuckwad who doesn't understand when things don't go the way he thinks they should."

Mike leaves a feather-light kiss on the tip of El's nose and smiles lovingly when he looks at her again. "I still can't believe you're actually here. How long are you staying?"

A yawn forces its way out of her. "Friday, 'cause you said if I ever visited it could only be three days. My stuff is in the Blazer, I was trying to get to the bookstore before you finished work but there was traffic so I just came here instead."

"Well," says Mike, a yawn escaping him as well, "I need to go take a shower, but you can just stay here, you're probably dead tired."

El nods. "Driving all day."

He kisses her again, more intimate than by the door because Eric had still been in the room, but still just so simple and beautifully amazing that El can't help but sigh and chase after his face with her own when he moves away. She doesn't catch him, though, because he gets up.

"Where're your keys?" Mike asks. "I'll go out to the truck and get your stuff when I'm done showering."

"Here," she answers, pulling them out of her back pocket and throwing them for him to catch as she sits up and removes her coat.

"Okay," says Mike, sweeping his stuff and her keys into a towel and wrapping it all up, "I'll be back soon. You can go to sleep."

He's about to go into the hall when El calls him back.

"What?"

"...can I just have one more kiss?"

Mike rolls his eyes but walks back over to her and grants her wish. The press of his warm and familiar lips against her own is gratifying after so long without it. "I love you so much," he says. "But I need to shower and you need to sleep."

El pouts. "Okay."

Mike frowns. "Don't give me that face, it's making me want to kiss you more."

She grins. "I'm not complaining."

He rolls his eyes again. "Of course not. Go to *sleep*."

"Fine, *dad*."

El lies down and tucks herself under the covers of his bed, watching as he waits to make sure she's alright before flipping the light switch and heading out.

"I love you," she whispers through the dark.

"I love you too," Mike whispers back.

"Love you more."

"Oh my god, El, not this again!"

"But it's true!"

"Is not!"

"Is too!"

"We love each other equally!"

"Do we, though?"

"You know what? This isn't happening. Good *night*."